A

BRIEF ABSTRACT

OF THE

Great *Oppreſsions* and *Injuries* which the late MANAGERS of the

Eaſt-India-Company

Have Acted on the LIVES, LIBERTIES and ESTATES of their *Fellow-Subjects.*

WITH A SHORT

ACCOUNT

OF THEIR

Unjuſt Dealings with the Natives in ſundry Parts of *INDIA*; which has ſo much expos'd the Honour and Intereſt of the Nation, and hazarded the Loſs of that Advantageous Trade;

Humbly Preſented to the Conſideration of the Honourable, the Knights, Citizens and Burgeſſes, in Parliament Aſſembled.

THEY have been great Promoters of *Arbitrary Government*, endeavouring by all Ways and Means to deſtroy the *Rights* and *Liberties* of the People, and enſlave us both at home and abroad to the Abſolute *Will* and *Pleaſure* of the late *King* and *Themſelves*; as appears by the following Intimations of their moſt *Illegal Practices.*

In the Firſt and Second Years of the Reign of the late *King*, they did procure his ſaid Majeſty's Proclamations, prohibiting their Fellow-Subjects from Trading to *India*, and commanding all Perſons from their Employments and Settlements in thoſe Parts, to repair to the *Company*'s Garriſons in *India*, or return home on *Pain of Death, and Forfeiture of Eſtate.*

They procur'd Judgment to be given in the *King's Bench* by the late *Chief Juſtice Jefferies*, whereby the *King's* Proclamation was declar'd to be Law, and Juries directed to find Damages accordingly. And thereupon, moſt vexa-

tious and chargeable Suits were brought againſt ſundry Perſons, for ſuch immenſe Sums as 150 and 200000 Pound-Actions, and diverſe People were illegally Fin'd on Informations of pretended Miſdemeanors, for Trading to *India*: Some Ships deſign'd on Voyages thither, have been Arbitrarily obſtructed, and others, at their Return, forc'd to Ranſom their Cargoes at the Coſt of the Fifth Part of their Values; whereby great Sums of Money have been extorted from the Subject contrary to all Juſtice and the known-Laws of the Land; and for the carrying on theſe their unlawful and exorbitant Oppreſſions, they procur'd a Letter from the Late *King* to the *Judge* of the *Admiralty*, which was deliver'd by one of their *Agents* in open *Court*; whereby he was over-aw'd in the Execution of his Office, and the due courſe of *Law* and *Juſtice* obſtructed: By which illegal Proceedings ſeveral of their Fellow-Subjects have been damnify'd to the amount of 40000 l.

They did procure a Ship of the Late *King*'s to be ſent to *India*, with Commiſſion to *ſeize*, or *deſtroy* all the Ships and Goods of their Fellow-Subjects that were found in the Limits of their Charter; and accordingly, ſaid Man of War did *ſeize* and occaſion the *deſtruction* of Three Ships and Cargoes, to the value of about 60000 l.

They did alſo procure a Power from the Late *King*, to Erect *Courts* of *Judicature*, and exerciſe *Marſhal-Law* within the Limits of their *Charter*; and to paſs final Sentence in Caſes Civil and Criminal without Appeal to *England*, which is humbly conceiv'd to be a moſt *Arbitrary Invaſion* of the Fundamental *Rights* and *Liberties* of their *Fellow-Subjects*.

They did by their Influences at *Court*, procure the late *King's* Commiſſion to the Commanders of their own freighted Ships, with leave to wear the Royal Enſigns; under which they have ſeiz'd ſeveral of their Fellow-Subjects Ships and Cargo's in *India*, carrying them to thoſe Places where they have ſet up *Unlawful Courts*, which they call *Courts* of *Admiralty*; and there made Prize of them, to the Ruine of their Proprietors, from whom they have in this manner taken the Value of above 50000 l.

As to their moſt unaccountable Actions at *St. Hellena*, in *deſtroying*, as well the *Lives* as *Eſtates* of their Fellow-Subjects at that Place, This *Honourable Houſe* has been already Preſented with a particular Account thereof by the Humble Petitions of ſome of the Perſons agriev'd, ſhewing, that beſides four Men which were kill'd, and fourteen wounded, they executed Two by a *Court* Illegally erected by the *Governor* there, and five more were put to Death by a *Court-Marſhal*, ſet up in that Place by the *Company's* Procurement.

For the obtaining, and ſupport of this Unlimited, Arbitrary Power over their Fellow-Subjects, Thoſe that manag'd the Affair, have preſum'd to Iſſue out Great Sums of the *Company's* Money under the Title of *Secret Services*; And they had brought themſelves under the *Annual Tribute* of Ten Thouſand Guinneas to the *Crown* as was ſeveral years paid to the Two Late *Kings*.

Nothing can be more notorious than the exorbitant Power they uſe to aſſume over thoſe that are concern'd with them, as well Merchants and Mariners in their Service, as Owners of Ships they take to Freight: Whereof Numerous Inſtances might be given; But it may ſuffice for all to obſerve, That upon any Difference which happens between them and any of the foreſaid Perſons, They compel them to ſtand to ſuch Determination, as ſhall be made by *Arbitrators* choſen out of their *Own Committee*, And ſo their *Will* is their *Law*; And they are both *Parties* and *Judges* in the Caſe, which is a moſt Arbitrary inſulting over their fellow Subjects.

They did ſome time ſince take upon them to deny Payment of Moneys when due, and requir'd by their *Creditors*, and preſumed to affix a Writing over their Door, declaring that they would not diſcharge any of their ſaid Debts till a certain time as they were therein pleas'd to appoint.

Some

Some of the prevailing Members in the *Committee*, have of late presum'd to introduce a new way of *vending* the *Company*'s Goods by *Private Contract*; which is directly contrary to their Establish'd Rules; and is very prejudicial to the *Trading Merchants* in general, as well as to the *Company*'s Interest, being a *Monopoly* in it self, and design'd only for the private Advantage of some few Persons that are admitted to a Concern therein.

They have taken upon them to impose *Illegal Oaths* on their Fellow-Subjects both at home and abroad; As for one Instance, Their *General* Sir *JOHN CHILD*, forc'd this following Oath to be Subscrib'd and Sworn to by sundry Sea-men belonging to the Ship *Adventure* in the River of *Surrat*, before he would pay them their Wages, *viz.*

I *The Subscriber, will be Obedient to His Majesty, and observant of His Authority establish'd here abroad, and hereby declare, I will, in Obedience to His Proclamation, Royal and Righteous Command, withdraw my self from, and wholly relinquish with Abhorrence, all* Rebels *and* Interlopers. *Witness my Hand.*

They have of late years sent out Ships to *India* at most unseasonable times, and detain'd them there much longer than usual, or than any real Interest of the *Company*'s in a Regular Management of the Trade would require; and since, by their great Neglects, the *Dutch* took the Advantage to make themselves Masters of *Bantam*, whereby they were expuls'd from their most Commodious Settlement there. They have employ'd Ships for the procurement of *Pepper* to such Places, which for the known Unhealthiness of the Air, were formerly excepted in *Charter-Parties*; by all which most imprudent and irregular Actions, they have *occasion'd the Loss of several Thousands of our best Sea-men*, and *destroyed several considerable Ships*, to the great Damage of the Nation in general, as well as to the particular Owners; And out of this Ruine to others, the *Company* hope to reap the Benefit of employing said Ships some Years, without paying any thing at last for Freight or Demorage due to them.

Besides these evil Practices on their Fellow-Subjects, whose *Lives* and *Estates* they have thus dispos'd of at their Pleasure, their late Dealings also with the *Natives* of *India*, have been most unjust and unaccountable: For, first their *General* Sir *John Child*, did by their *Order* borrow of the Merchants of *Surrat* for their Accounts, about 400000 l. Sterling; And then withdrew from the Place without rendring any satisfaction for that *vast Debt*; And at his Arrival at their Island of *Bombay*, he employ'd the English Ships under his Command to make further spoil on the *Mogull*'s Subjects, by *seizing* all their Ships and Goods they could meet with; which violence they committed under the *Royal Ensigns* of our Nation. And by the last advice from those Parts they had taken about fifteen Sail, computed to amount in the whole to a much *bigger Sum* than their *aforesaid Debt* which they left unpaid at *Surrat*: And these their strange Proceedings are in all respects most unjustifiable; for they have not, in reality, receiv'd any Injuries that require such Reparations. Nor did they make due Applications to the *Great Mogull*, for Redress of their pretended Grievances before they acted the foresaid *Depredations* upon his Subjects.

In several *Ports* in the Bay of *Bengall*, which are also in the *Dominions* of the *Great Mogull*, they have not only us'd the like force in taking their Ships, but also made Assaults on the Land; *destroying* the Houses, Goods and Ships in Harbour by Fire; and killing many of the Inhabitants

all theſe *cruel Outrages* have been committed without any provocations that may help to extenuate, much leſs juſtifie them: Nor has the ſucceſs of their Attempts been better than the Merits of their Cauſe; for by the prepoſterous Actings of thoſe to whom they committed the management of theſe Martial Exploits, there ſeems to have been a fatal Infatuation amongſt them; and all they have hitherto done in near Three Years, is only to deprive themſelves of that moſt Beneficial Trade, and *dig Graves* for many hundreds of our Country-Men that were employ'd in that unhappy and unjuſtifiable Expedition.

They ſeem to deſign to ſet up this new *Trade* of *Warfare*, and make it their main Buſineſs in all Places; for upon moſt unjuſt, groundleſs and frivolous pretences they have likewiſe made *War* on the *King* of *Siam*, wherein their *Ingratitude* doth highly aggravate their *Crime*; for that *Prince* has not only always treated them in a very friendly manner, but been even *laviſh* of his Favours to thoſe of Our Nation, who have Traded to, or reſided in his Kingdom; And he had taken into his Service ſeveral of our Country-Men, amongſt whom, ſome were preferr'd to places of great Command, which was for the *Honour*, and might have been (as in ſome Inſtances it prov'd) for the conſiderable *Intereſt* and *Advantage* of the *Nation* and *Company*. But in *June* 87. Two Veſſels of War belonging to the *Company*, beſieg'd and aſſaulted the Port of *Mergen*, where the *Engliſh* had the Government, which prov'd a fatal Occaſion of the *Maſſacre* of about ſixty of *Our Country-men*, One of the *Company*'s Veſſels being taken, and the other forc'd to ſecure himſelf by flight; Upon which, the *King* of *Siam* has proclaim'd War againſt the *Company*, But with a *kind Invitation* of all *Engliſh-Men* unconcern'd with them; to whom he promiſes the ſame Friendſhip as formerly.

Theſe are brief Intimations of the late *Illegal* and *Arbitrary Proceedings*, which though they paſs under the Name of the *Company*, yet are really and juſtly chargeable on a few ruling Members in the Committee, and particularly on Sir JOSIA CHILD, by whom they have been chiefly, if not ſolely, projected and perpetrated, He having for ſome years paſt uſurp'd ſuch *a Deſpotic Power, and Sovereign Authority* over all their Affairs here, as he has taught his *Emiſſaries* to aſſume and practice abroad: The Means whereby he has arriv'd to this arbitrary Dominion, being by that *pernicious Cuſtom* they have amongſt them of making every 500 *l. a Vote*, and ſo his 50000 *l. Stock*, with ſome other conſiderable Sums that are under his management, has ſubjected the whole to his Diſpoſe: And tho' there is ſtill the Formality of a *Committee*, according to the number the *Charter* directs; Yet they are all, in effect, made choice of *by himſelf*, and Depoſable at his Pleaſure, as appears by the ſtrange Alterations have been lately made in turning out ſo many Gentlemen of known Integrity and long Experience in thoſe Affairs, becauſe they would not comply with his Unjuſt and Unwarrantable Proceedings; and ſupplying their Rooms with thoſe who have made up what they wanted in other Qualifications, by their entire Submiſſion to him in all things.

In Conſideration of the Premiſes, 'tis Humbly Pray'd

That the *Preſent Charter* be Call'd in, and that becauſe the Trade may be beſt manag'd to a *National Advantage* by a *Company*:

That a *New Company* be legally confirm'd with a Joynt-Stock, under ſuch a Conſtitution, as upon due Conſideration ſhall be moſt Adviſeable, And that ſome ſpeedy and Effectual Courſe be taken for the retrieving our loſt Credit, and re-eſtabliſhing our Commerce on ſuch a Bottom, as by a Prudent and regular Management afterwards, may conduce as well to the Publick Honour and Advantage, as the particular Intereſt of the Adventurers.

FINIS.